(i) ready availability of basic infrastructure;

(ii) availability of land at cheaper rates;

(iii) close proximity to sea and air base; and

(iv) availability of all types of terrain for carrying out tactical exercises.

(c) and (d). A flying Training school is to start at Bihar near Patna in the State of Bihar.

Plague and Cerebral Malaria

3819. PROF. P.J. KURIEN:
SHRI RUPCHAND PAL:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government had set up an Expert Committee on public health system to look into last year's plague and cerebral malaria epidemic;

(b) if so, whether this Committee has given its findings and suggestions;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI): (a) An Expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Prof. J.S. Bajaj was constituted to comprehensively review the Public Health System in the Country.

(b) The Committee has submitted its report on 6th June, 1996.

(c) The Committee has made many short-term and long-term recommendations. Some of the important recommendations made are:

(i) Review of National Health Policy.

(ii) Establishment of health impact assessment cell.

(iii) Surveillance of critically polluted areas.

(iv) Establishing an Apex Technical Advisory Committee.

(v) Opening of Regional Schools of Public Health.

(vi) Establishing a Centre for Disease Control.

(d) The Report is under examination by the Government.

Release of Cauvery Water to Tamil Nadu

3820. SHRI A.G.S. RAM BABU:
SHRI V. DHANANJYA KUMAR:

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government have initiated any fresh proposal with the Government of Karnataka in regard to the release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu so as to mitigate the sufferings of the farmers of the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps being taken in this regard;

(c) the status of the Cauvery River Water Tribunal after the reported resignation of the Chairman of the Tribunal; and

(d) the latest position of the entire issue?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA): (a) and (b). To resolve the Cauvery Water Dispute, the Central Government constituted Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal on 2nd June, 1990. The Tribunal passed an Interim Award on 25.6.91 directing the Karnataka Government to ensure inflows of 205 Thousand Million Cubic Feet (TMC ft.) of water into Mettur Reservoir of Tamil Nadu for each water year (June to May) with monthly and weekly stipulations. 6 TMC ft of water for Karaikal region of the Union Territory of Pondicherry will be delivered by the State of Tamil Nadu in a regulated manner. Further, the state of Karnataka shall not increase its area under irrigation by the waters of river Cauvery beyond the existing 11.2 lakh acres.

So far, the Tribunal has conducted 90 hearings and the basin States are participating in the proceedings of Tribunal.

(c) and (d). No hearing of the Tribunal could take place after the resignation of its Chairman, Hon'ble Justice Shri Chittatosh Mookerjee.

As the Chairman of the Tribunal has to be a sitting Judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India has been requested to nominate a suitable Judge as the Chairman of the Tribunal.

Defence Overhaul

3821. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Defence experts have since advised the Government to go in for major Defence overhaul:

(b) if so, whether the Government have since undertaken an exercise in identifying the needs and quantifying the resources required; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) The modernisation and upgradation of the equipment and weaponry of the Armed Forces is an on ongoing process.

(b) and (c). This year as well, as in previous years, an exercise was undertaken to determine the priorities for modernisation and the funds required. For this purpose, the changing threat scenario, advancement of technology, global and regional security environment as also the resources available are taken into account. These were duly projected to the Ministry of Finance to enable it to allocate funds keeping in view the available resources, the demands of different sectors of the economy, as well as the projected security concerns. It will not be in the national security interest to divulge the details of the modernisation and upgradation plans.

Foreign Participation in University Education

3822. DR. RAM CHANDRA DOME: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the U.G.C. Chairperson recently has made a statement regarding foreign participation in University education;

(b) if so, whether this was done after consultation with the academic community;

(c) whether the Government are taking any measures to resolve the resource crunch in the U.G.C.; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MUHI RAM SAIKIA): (a) and (b). According to the information furnished by University Grants Commission (UGC), the Chairperson, UGC, while inaugurating the Round Table on 'University Management' for Vice-Chancellors at Himachal Pradesh University on 13.6.96, made a general statement/observation that in wake of liberalisation process, the Indian University system is likely to face competition from foreign universities who would be coming forward to offer their programmes to the Indian students. This observation was intended to forewarn the VCs to gear up for the impending challenge.

(c) and (d). Plan and Non-Plan grants provided by the Government to UGC have been steadily increasing over the years. An outlay of Rs. 612.38 crore has been allocated to UGC for the 8th Plan as against a sum of Rs. 576.01 crore provided in the 7th Plan.

Declaration of National Highways

3823. SHRI DILEEP SANGHANI:
SHRI DINSHA PATEL:

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to declare State roads as National Highways in Gujarat;

(b) if so, the details with locations thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether Government of Gujarat has sent any proposals for declaring new National Highways in the State; and

(e) if so, the current status of these proposals?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) to (e). Even though proposals to declare some State roads in Gujarat as National Highways have been received, it has not been possible to do so due to paucity of funds.

Strengthening of National Highways

3824. SHRI SUDHIR GIRI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the National Highways proposed to be strengthened in the country in the current financial year, State and U.T. wise;

(b) the total expenditure proposed to be incurred for this purpose; and

(c) the criteria of selecting the National Highways in the current year?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) A statement is annexed.

(b) A total of 346 km of National Highways at a cost of Rs. 101.90 crore is proposed to be strengthened, as per Annual Plan 1996-97.

(c) Stretches for strengthening are selected from qualifying kilometers beased on their condition, traffic intensity, inter-se-priority and availability of funds.